Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method of protecting tissue and preventing tissue damage in surgery comprising providing surfaces involved in said surgery with a wet coating of a physiologically acceptable aqueous solution of a hydrophilic, polymeric material prior to manipulation of said tissue during said surgery, wherein:

A) said polymeric material is a water-soluble, biocompatible, pharmaceutically acceptable carboxymethylcellulose, pvp, polypeptide, polysaccharide, excluding hyaluronic acid having a molecular weight above about 1,500,000, ~~synthetic polymer~~, salt, complex or mixture thereof; and

B) said polymeric material has a molecular weight of about 50,000 D or above, and the concentration in said aqueous solution of said polymer is in the range of from about 0.01% to about 15% by weight, said molecular weight and concentration having values such that said aqueous solution is capable of providing wet coatings on said surfaces involved in said surgery.

2. (canceled)

3. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein said polymeric material is carboxymethylcellulose or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or complex thereof.

4. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein said polymeric material is PVP or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or complex thereof.

5. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein said polymeric material is hyaluronic acid or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or complex thereof.

6. (original)The method of claim 1 wherein said surgery is abdominal, peritoneal, pericardial, obstetric, gynecological, neurosurgical, arthroscopic, laparoscopic, endoscopic, orthopedic, plastic, reconstructive, prosthetic, ENT, dental, muscle or tendon.

7. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein said involved surfaces coated with said solution of polymeric material comprise tissue or surgical article surfaces or both.